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Message Text

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SUBJECT: DEFENCE MINISTER RICHARDSON'S ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT

REF: OTTAWA 3417

1. ON OCTOBER 15 THE HONORABLE JAMES RICHARDSON, MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE, ADDRESSED PARLIAMENT REGARDING CANADA'S DEFENSE POSTURE. HIS STATEMENTS PROVIDED AN ELABORATION ON SEVERAL PARAGRAPHS IN THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE.

2. IN THE FIRST PART OF THE SPEECH, RICHARDSON REFERS TO CANADIAN PEACEKEEPING EFFORTS AND TO THE "TWO THOUSAND CANADIANS WHO ARE GIVING DEDICATED SERVICE IN PEACEKEEPING DUTIES IN CYPRUS AND THE MIDDLE EAST... I WOULD LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THE WAY IN WHICH WE MUST FINANCE AND PAY FOR THE WORK BEING DONE BY THE ARMED FORCES, EXPECIALLY IN THESE DAYS OF VERY HIGH PRICES AND RISING COSTS... CANADIAN ARMED FORCES HAVE AN IMPORTANT AND USEFUL ROLE TO PLAY IN SUPPORTING THE CONCEPT OF PEACEKEEPING AND IMPROVING THE PRACTICAL METHODS OF PEACEKEEPING." AFTER MENTIONING THAT HE WILL VISIT CYPRUS IN ABOUT THREE WEEKS, RICHARDSON REMINDS THE HOUSE OF COMMONS THAT CANADA "DOUBLED THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL IN CYPRUS THIS SUMMER ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS WAS A
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TEMPORARY COMMITMENT."

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3. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN PEACEKEEPING, RICHARDSON CITES THE FIRST TASK OF THE ARMED FORCES AS "NOTHING LESS THAN TO DEFEND CANADIAN INDEPENDENCE AAND SOVEREIGNTY." HE THEN BRIEFLY CITES CANDA'S SECOND IMPORTANT TASK ("TO PARTICPATE WITH US IN THE AIR DEFENSE OF NORTH AMERICA"), BEFORE GOING ON TO THE FINAL RESPONSIBILITY WHICH ARISES "OUT OF OUR BELIEF IN THE CONCEPT OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND OUR COMMITMENT TO PLAY A USEFUL AND IMPORTANT PART IN THE NATO ALLIANCE."

4. RICHARDSON THEN TURNS TO THE BUDGET PROBLEM AND STATES "WE ARE REALLY NOT ABLE TO CARRY OUT ALL OF THE TASKS EVEN WITHIN THE INCREASED BUDGET UNDER WHICH WE ARE OPERATING THIS YEAR. THERE IS SOME TALK ABOUT THE WAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS CUT THE DEFENCE BUDGET. I THINK THE FIRST THING THAT SHOULD BE MADE CLEAR IS THAT THE DEFENCE BUDGET IS NOT BEING CUT... LAST YEAR, FISCAL 1973-74, OUR EXPENDITURES WERE $2,231 MILLION, JUST MORE THAN 10 PERCENT OF ALL THE MONEY THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENDS. THIS YEAR, FISCAL 1974-75, THE NATIONAL DEFENCE BUDGET WILL BE INCREASED BY MORE THAN 275 MILLION, FOR A TOTAL OF MORE THAN $2,500 MILLION. THIS MEANS THAT WE WILL HAVE MORE THAN $100 MILLION OF SUPPLEMENTARY EXPENDITURE OVER AND ABOVE THE 7 PERCENT ANNUAL INCREASE THAT WAS APPROVED IN THE FORMULA LAST YEAR."

5. HOWEVER, RICHARDSON GOES ON TO SAY "THE CURRENT RATIO BETWEEN PERSONNEL COSTS, OPERATING COSTS AND CAPITAL COST IS NOT THE RIGHT RATIO. IN MY JUDGEMENT, WE MUST SPEND A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF OUR TOTAL BUDGET ON A NEW CAPITAL EQUIPMENT AND OPERATIONS AND A LOWER PERCENTAGE ON PERSONNEL."

6. THE MINISTER'S CONCLUSION IS THAT CANADA "MUST REDUCE SOME OF THE COMMITMENTS ENTRUSTED TO THE ARMED FORCES IF WE ARE TO REDUCE NUMBERS ... THE ARMED FORCES ARE NOW OVERTASKED AND REDUCTION IN NUMBERS INEVITABLY MEANS SOME REDUCTION IN TASKS."
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7. RICHARDSON CONCLUDES BY STATING THAT CANADA'S "CENTRAL OBJECTIVE IS TO IMPROVE OUR MILITARY CAPABILITY. IN MY VIEW THIS MEANS THAT THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES MUST BE 'BETTER AND FEWER'."

8. FULL TEXT IS BEING SENT BY AIRMAIL TO EUR/CAN.
PORTER

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